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DE RUEHK #1078/01 2900832  
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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7532  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2378  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9895  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0867  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8651  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1816  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1491  
RHMMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001078

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/PB AND S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2018

TAGS: PTER PINR PGOV KDEM ASEC PREL PHUM BG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR LAYS DOWN MARKER ON FORMATION OF HUJI-B  
OFFSHOOT "ISLAMIC DEMOCRATIC PARTY"

REF: A. DHAKA 1037

1B. DHAKA 882

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

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11. (S) The Ambassador conveyed to Bangladesh's outgoing Counter Terrorism Director the USG's strong concerns about efforts by Foreign Terrorist Organization HUJI-B to transform itself into the "Islamic Democratic Party." While emphasizing the importance of keeping potential extremist groups above ground, the GOB representative promised to slow efforts to allow the Party to register and to discuss the issue further with USG counterparts.

Outgoing Counter Terrorism Head Meets with Ambassador

12. (S) On his last day in office, outgoing Director of Bangladesh's Counter Terrorism Bureau Brigadier General A.T.M. Amin met with the Ambassador, Political/Economic Counselor, and Regional Affairs Counselor on October 15. Recently promoted to Major General and assigned as the Director General of the paramilitary Ansars and Village Defense Parties, Amin said that his promotion had been 7 - 8 months overdue. According to Amin, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed had objected to the idea of promoting Amin to be Director General of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), since he did not want to make any changes in that crucial position prior to elections. Fakhruddin also thought that a new political government might want to make a change in that position. There had been discussion of sending Amin to be Division Commander in Comilla, but that would keep him too far away from Dhaka. Amin implied that his assignment to the Ansars would be temporary, and he hinted he might return to DGFI as Director General after elections or take over a newly created CT agency (which he said he was developing). In the meantime, Amin said he would continue his liaison role with foreign embassies and would remain involved in CT issues as his successor was brought up to speed.

Warning about Islamic Democratic Party

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13. (S) Most of the discussion related to the recent formation of the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) by former members of the banned Foreign Terrorist Organization, HUJI-B (Ref A). At first, Amin attempted to defend the initiative to bring the former HUJI-B members into the mainstream. The

Ambassador forcefully expressed USG concern about HUJI-B's continued activities, in particular in conjunction with other transnational terrorist groups. Amin claimed that DGFI maintained tight surveillance on the IDP, but acknowledged the need to move carefully. The Ambassador pointed out that there could be problems in the future, if the IDP were ever able to insinuate itself into the political process and form alliances with other parties. We could then face the possibility of the IDP having members of parliament or cabinet ministers, using their power to obstruct counter terrorism work..

¶4. (S) Amin promised to discuss this issue further with the USG. In the meantime, he promised to talk with the Election Commission regarding the IDP's registration. Amin commented that the issue was still manageable and no irreparable harm had been done. In passing, Amin also noted gadfly journalist Shoaib Chowdhury (whose legal problems have been chronicled in past Human Rights Reports and in Ref B) and Amcit Richard Benkin's strange involvement with the IDP.

Comment and Action Request

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¶5. (S) As we have done in previous meetings with Caretaker Advisers, the Ambassador sent a strong message to Amin that the USG would not support an attempt to legitimize HUJI-B terrorists through the formation of the IDP. Amin understood the Ambassador's point, and we will follow up with him and others to continue to underscore the importance we attach to this issue. As we proceed, we would welcome Dept's guidance

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on how the HUJI-B FTO Designation would apply to a likely successor organization, like the Islamic Democratic Party.  
Moriarty